

S/N: 10/595,832

Reply to Office Action of September 1, 2009

Atty Dkt No. PROT0104PUSA

Amendments to the Drawings:

The attached sheet(s) of drawings (1/6 and 6/6) includes changes to Fig. 1a, 1b, and 6a. These sheets (1/6 and 6/6), which includes Figs. 1a and 1b, and 6a-6c, replace the original sheet(s) including Figs. 1a and 1b, and 6a-6c.

Attachment: Replacement Sheets

Remarks

Claims 1-26 were pending in the application. Claims 17-26 were withdrawn. Claims 1-16 stand rejected. The drawings are objected to by the Examiner. Claims 1-16 are amended by this paper. Claims 17 - 26 are cancelled by this paper. Drawings 1a, 1b, and 6a are amended by this paper. The specification is amended by this paper. New claims 27 - 32 are added by this paper. After entry of this amendment, claims 1-16 and 27 - 32 will be pending. No new matter was added by these amendments. Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested.

Applicants thank the Examiner for highlighting that some references may not have been considered. Applicants have filed a Supplemental Information Disclosure Statement and paid the associated fee.

The drawings are objected to as failing to comply with 37 C.F.R. § 1.84(p)(5). Applicants have corrected the drawing sheets in compliance with 37 C.F.R. § 1.121(d) and request the Examiner to withdraw the objection.

The disclosure is objected to because of informalities. Applicants have amended the specification to use U.S. patent numbers having commas instead of decimal points and correct or eliminate reference numbers. Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to withdraw the objection.

Claims 4 and 9-12 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. Applicants have removed the word "preferably" from claim 4, line 3; claim 9, line 8; and claim 11, line 6. Applicants have amended claims 9, 10, 11, and 12 to provide proper antecedent basis in the claims. Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to withdraw the rejection of claims 4 and 9-12 with respect to 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph.

Claims 1-10, 12-14, and 16 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Koch (US 4,486,123) (hereinafter "*Koch*") in view of Laursen (US 4,676,696) (hereinafter "*Laursen*"). Applicants have amended claims 1 and 16 to recite that the process unit is a vessel unit as described in paragraph [0008] distinguishing the vessel unit from a pipeline. The vessel unit is a non-bendable vessel unit as schematically illustrated in Figures 2b - 2e and Figures 4b - 4e. *Koch* discloses installation of a pipeline. Although the pipeline is assembled from shorter stiff pieces of pipe, the pipeline as such, when assembled, will act as a relatively flexible element over a substantial length from the surface to the seabed, creating the "J" shape described in the Abstract. A non-bendable pipeline would simply break due to the high bending stresses. *Laursen* does not remedy this deficiency. *Laursen* discloses in the Summary of the Invention an apparatus for hinging the flowline section from the vertical orientation to a desired final position.

The Examiner correctly notes that *Koch* does not show any means for receiving the lower end of the pipeline at the seabed. The guide tube 2 of *Laursen* is intended for the installation of pipelines. When a pipeline is received and subsequently laid down, only a very little portion of the weight of the pipeline (on the order of 10 tons) will be transferred to the receptor. After only a very short inclination from vertical of the pipeline, it will start to bend and lie down on the seabed. After the first part of the pipeline has touched the seabed, the receptor will not take up much of the pipeline weight. The side forces are negligible.

When a heavy and non-bendable object like Applicants' vessel unit 4 is installed, nearly the whole weight of the vessel unit (as much as 100-200 tons) will act against the receptor until the separator is laid completely down on the seabed or on a frame on the seabed. The side forces will be substantial and increase as the vessel unit gets more inclined as disclosed in paragraph [0067]. The side forces are of the same magnitude as the weight of the vessel unit. As a consequence, the receptor must be designed to take up these forces. As a consequence, a person of ordinary skill in the art would not modify *Koch* using *Laursen* with any reasonable probability of success when installing a heavy, non-bendable, and elongated object such as

Applicants' vessel unit. Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to withdraw the rejection of claims 1 and 16 in view of amended claims 1 and 16.

Claims 2-10 and 12-14 depend directly or indirectly from claim 1 and are patentable for at least the same reasons as claim 1. The Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the rejections of claims 2-10 and 12-14 in view of amended claim 1.

Claim 11 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Koch* and *Laursen* as applied to claim 1 in further view of *Pattison* (US 3,690,112) (hereinafter "*Pattison*"). As discussed above, one of ordinary skill in the art would not expect to succeed by modifying *Koch* with *Laursen* to make Applicants' claimed embodiments in view of amended claim 1. *Pattison* does not remedy this deficiency. Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to withdraw the rejection of claim 11 in view of amended claim 1.

Claim 15 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Koch* and *Laursen* as applied to claim 1 in further view of *Coblentz* (US 6,375,407) (hereinafter "*Coblentz*"). As discussed above, one of ordinary skill in the art would not look with any probability of success to modifying *Koch* with *Laursen*. *Coblentz* does not remedy this deficiency. Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to withdraw the objection to claim 15.

New claims 27 - 32 recite a method for installation of an elongate non-bendable vessel unit. They recite steps not typically associated with pipeline or flowline installation. Applicants submit that claims 27 - 32 define over *Koch*, *Laursen*, *Pattison*, and *Coblentz* combinations. For example, the method recites steps of retaining the vessel unit, locking the vessel unit to the framework, and transferring the very heavy vessel unit load to the receptor during lowering to the seabed. Additional steps include dampening and rotating not associated with pipeline or flowline installation.

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Please charge any fees or credit any overpayments as a result of the filing of this paper to our Deposit Account No. 02-3978.

Applicants have attempted to place this case in condition for allowance by the above amendments to the claims. The Examiner is respectfully requested to telephone Applicants' agent if it would advance the prosecution of this case. The Examiner is respectfully requested to pass this case to issue.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Hilditch et al.

By /G Daniel Templeton/

G. Daniel Templeton

Reg. No. 47,130

Agent for Applicants

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BROOKS KUSHMAN P.C.

1000 Town Center, 22nd Floor

Southfield, MI 48075-1238

Phone: 248-358-4400

Fax: 248-358-3351